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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 281st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 23 January 1996, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mrs. BELEMBAOGO

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 3) (continued)

Croatia (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mrs. Babic, Mrs. Ujevic-Buljeta, Mrs. Hrabar, Mrs. Simonovic, Mrs. Cvjetko, and Mrs. Jarak (Croatia) took places at the Committee table.

2. Mrs. HRABAR (Croatia) said that recent figures on the number of children not attending school were lower because the total number of refugees and displaced persons had dropped. Many had left Croatia for the United Kingdom, Germany and the Nordic countries.

3. The Croatian Government was currently drafting medical legislation that would include provisions on abortion. But a difference of opinion had arisen between the legal and medical professions: lawyers had argued that, within the meaning of the Convention, a girl's right to choose should in no way be limited and that it should not be obligatory to inform her parents. Doctors had contended that medical complications inevitably arose if parents did not know their child had had an abortion. The Committee's advice would be welcome. Should Croatian law prohibit a girl from having an abortion without the permission of her parents or should it allow her total freedom of choice?

4. Mrs. UJEVIC-BULJETA (Croatia) said that the number of cases of persons requesting a change of name and surname had increased sharply since the war and included many in which parents suing for divorce disagreed about the surname of their child. In principle, the guardianship authorities would not agree to change the child's surname to that of the spouse holding custody unless they could establish that the other spouse played no role in the care of the child. The arrangements described in paragraph 110 of the report involved the decision not of the guardianship authorities, but of the administrative body, and were applied only if the whereabouts of the parent were unknown. If that parent's relatives or friends informed the authorities that he was attempting to contact his child, however, the request for a change of surname was denied. In addition, a parent who requested that his child's surname should be changed was asked whether the surname has been causing problems for the child; if he replied that he wished to prevent potential problems, his request was also denied.

5. Miss MASON said the Committee could not give a categorical answer to the Croatian question on a girl child's freedom to choose: the State party should simply try to ensure that the relevant legislation was in keeping with the Convention and, in particular, with articles 3 and 12.

6. In its consideration of article 29, the Croatian Government had discusse the aims of pre-school education, but had not discussed the education of older children or adolescents. It had referred to the question of the development of the personality of the child raised in paragraph 1 (a), but had not to the crucial paragraphs that followed. It might have made better use of the opportunity to assess its progress in promoting understanding, peace and tolerance, particularly in view of the ethnic diversity of the Croatian

population. It would be useful to know how, and by what measures, the Government explained Croatia's role in the war to Croatian children. Did it portray Croatia as the victim of aggressors? Or did it suggest that responsibility for the hostilities lay with all parties to the conflict?

7. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that he agreed with Miss Mason's view on the answer to Croatia's question about the right of girl children to have abortions. Croatia's unusual and complex situation likewise made it difficult to give the standard reply, about the changing of names. In his view, however, Croatia's approach of giving primary consideration to the best interests of the child and asking him his opinion was fully in keeping with the Convention.

8. Croatia should provide further clarifications on its position vis-à-vis child prostitution: under Croatian law, which party was criminalized, the child or the adult? It should also describe its system for the detection of child abuse. Were teachers and health professionals required to report signs of such abuse to the competent authorities? Health professionals, who were bound by a professional code of ethics to protect the privacy of their patients, must be able to make exceptions so that they might report cases of child abuse.

9. Mrs. KARP said that what was best for a child varied from culture to culture. In the drafting of abortion legislation, there were many factors that needed to be weighed in the balance. One was that women and girls were often raped during time of war. Another was that Croatia had a Muslim minority and requiring that a Muslim girl should consult her parents before having an abortion would have implications that went far beyond the medical ones. Experience had also shown that the reluctance of doctors to perform abortions was often the result of their sense of ethical responsibility; that obstacle could sometimes be overcome by not obliging doctors to perform abortions.

10. Croatia had described its efforts to cope with post-traumatic syndrome in young children. What programmes had it undertaken to cope with that problem in adolescent children? Were there special training programmes for professionals who dealt with very young children who had been abused?

11. Mrs. SARDENBERG said the Croatian Government should describe the curricular and extracurricular programmes it had undertaken to assist children suffering physically and psychologically from the devastations of the war. How had school curricula been revised to bring them into line with article 12 of the Convention?

12. What was the position of the Croatian Government with regard to international efforts to ban land-mines?

13. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that strategies for the psychological recovery of children from the shock of war should include similar therapy for parents, teachers and health professionals. Were any such measures envisaged?

14. Mrs. BABIC (Croatia) said that the principles described in paragraph 32 of the report also applied to the education of older children and adolescents. The Croatian Government was committed to implementing article 29 of the Convention and was therefore working to incorporate questions of human rights and fundamental freedoms into school curricula.

15. Contrary to what members of the Committee seemed to believe, the population of Crotia was largely homogenous, with several small ethnic minorities. The Croatian Government was, moreover, extremely sensitive to the need to protect those communities. The Constitution provided that all Croatians were equal and those provisions were reflected in school curricula. The children of ethnic minorities were taught in their own languages, in consultation with representatives of those communities.

16. In Croatia's view, the attempts of one ethnic group to exercise hegemony over others had led to the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia. Croatia did not wish to portray itself as a victim. The Government considered that national prosperity must be based on the identity and needs of each individual. It therefore promoted the rights of individuals and not of groups, and was trying to teach that principle to all members of Croatian society.

17. Mrs. SIMONOVIC (Croatia) said that the meaures taken to provide psychological and social assistance to the victims of war included the establishment of the Government Office for War Victims and a special commission for coordination of assistance and health protection for children in exceptional circumstances. Symposia had been conducted on post-traumatic syndrome, the treatment, rehabilitation and education of children with war injuries, the surgical care of children wounded in war and the psychological problems of wounded children and families. Counselling centres had been set up for children and adults suffering from war-induced trauma.

18. One study was currently focusing on 600 children whose parents had been killed in the war and who were receiving therapy. A joint Croatian-German project in Split provided care for some 2,500 children who had been affected by the fighting.

19. Mrs. HRABAR (Croatia), replying to the question on the aims of educatio said that respect for human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination were explicitly included as goals in legislation on primary and secondary school education. Those principles must be taught in language, literature, geography, history and music classes. For children over 12 years of age, one period a week was devoted to discussing their problems with teachers; questions on sex and issues of tolerance and human rights were commonly raised. Sex education was taught in biology, literature and other classes.

20. Her Government had been active in making information on the rights of t child available to children and parents alike, and indeed to all adults. The issue of children's rights had been taken up on radio and television, one suc radio programme having received an astonishing number of calls from listener despite the fact that it had been broadcast from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m. Less attention had been given to the question in the press. Admittedly, more time would be needed before everyone had been made aware of the issues involved.

21. Mrs. CVJETKO (Croatia), replying to the question on who reported cases of ill-treatment, said that it was the duty of teachers and school psychologists to inform the local social work centre of any evidence of child abuse or neglect. If a child failed to attend school, they must try to find out why. Clinics were likewise obligated to report such cases. In 1994, the Ministry of Health had issued instructions to doctors on procedures for reporting cases of child abuse. The police had also been alerted to the problem and neighbours were expected to inform the authorities of suspected cases too.

22. With regard to the question on sexual offences, she said that the Penal Code of Croatia made provision for punishing teachers who abused their position to have sex with their pupils, cases involving children up to 14 years of age being regarded as particularly serious.

23. Concerning prostitution, anyone who by force, threat or deceit incited young girls to engage in prostitution was liable to criminal prosecution. New legislation would soon be drafted on that subject.

24. In respect of the question on land-mines, she said that Croatia had launched a public awareness campaign on the subject in conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A symposium recently held in Dubrovnik had dealt with the issue, which was also taught in school curricula.

25. Referring to the question on psychological and social health, she said that Croatia was working to assist all victims of the conflict. When the war had broken out, psychologists, social workers and doctors had immediately begun giving children intensive care to help them deal with their experiences. A number of Government bodies were working with juvenile victims of the war and were coordinating their efforts. Resources had been allocated for a programme to rehabilitate children with psychological disorders resulting from the conflict.

26. It was fortunate that, in the area of health care and welfare, Croatia had highly specialized experts who had ensured continuity with the situation existing prior to the war. Mental health centres for children existed at the county level.

27. Mrs. UJEVIC-BULJETA (Croatia), referring to the question whether Croatia's efforts had focused solely on children, said that all health care and counselling centres for war-related psychological disorders tried to involve the entire family in their rehabilitation work. Many counselling centres worked free of charge.

28. Mrs. HRABAR (Croatia), replying to the question whether children's views could be heard, said it was her Government's standpoint that the best family for a child was a healthy one and that, if relations were good, then the rights set forth in articles 12 and 16 of the Convention were being implemented.

29. In schools, every class had a representative who attended meetings of the teaching staff. While children had little say about curricula, they could express their opinion, a right which they had, in fact, recently exercised in

Zagreb, where children had protested at the Ministry of Education against the appointment of a particular school headmaster. Children did not allow adults to treat them as objects.

30. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to ask questions on the section of the list of issues entitled "Special protection measures", which read:

"Special protection measures
(Arts. 22, 30, 32-40 of the Convention)

25. How is the Government ensuring that the authorities dealing with the procedures relating to the assessment and placement of children into categories of displaced persons and refugees, the issuance of residence permits and the handling of family reunification requests are implementing these procedures in a manner which is consistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

26. Please provide information on the effectiveness of measures taken to ensure that refugees receive the necessary documentation to allow them access to essential social services in Croatia.

27. Please provide further information on the implementation of article 39 of the Convention, particularly with respect to the measures taken or envisaged for the development of a systematic approach to the provision of support for children who have undergone traumatic experiences on account of the war.

28. Please provide more information on the measures being taken and the coordination of these efforts for the prevention of juvenile delinquency, in view of the increase in the reported incidence of juvenile delinquency.

29. Please provide further information on the arrangements which exist to monitor and inspect the conditions in correctional institutions. Please provide more information on the procedures for the submission of complaints (para. 170 of the report).

30. What measures other than those mentioned in paragraph 367 is the Government envisaging to undertake for the prevention and elimination of the problem of the sexual exploitation of children?"

31. Mrs. KARP, noting what had apparently been an increase in juvenile delinquency, asked what percentage of juvenile delinquents came from refugee and minority groups. Had any programmes been introduced to cope with the problem and, if so, how had they been put into practice?

32. For what percentage of children involved in acts of juvenile delinquency had it been decided not to institute criminal proceedings? What alternatives were available to placement in correctional institutions? How was the Government of Croatia dealing with the fact that there might be a connection between placement in correctional institutions and the rise in juvenile delinquency?

33. Was any information available on police brutality towards children, particularly minorities? Who investigated complaints and what structures existed in that regard?

34. Were there any figures on children held in pre-trial detention? What was the legal maximum time-limit for such detention? Were children held separately from adults?

35. Miss MASON, referring to the requirement pursuant to article 37 (b) of the Convention that children were to be imprisoned only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, requested clarification on the statement in paragraph 350 of the report that a prison sentence for a juvenile could not be longer than 10 years, that a juvenile above 16 could not be given a prison sentence longer than that prescribed for the offence he or she had committed and that the shortest sentence was not prescribed.

36. She welcomed the fact that Croatia was amending its juvenile law and asked how the participatory rights of juveniles were guaranteed under the current legal system.

37. Mr. HAMMARBERG asked how many Gypsies lived in Croatia and what measures had been taken to ensure the right of Roma children to education.

38. Mr. KOLOSOV inquired what measures had been envisaged to overcome growing violence among children and adolescents.

39. Mrs. SARDENBERG requested information about figures on missing children. What efforts had been made to assist parents in finding their children and was there any connection between that problem and the issue of evictions and evacuations?

40. Mrs. CVJETKO (Croatia), referring to statistics on juvenile delinquency, said that, in 1991, when the war had begun, the police had been sent to defend the country and there were no figures available for that year. While juvenile delinquency had risen in 1992 and 1993, it had returned to its pre-war level by 1995. The Ministry of Welfare would be drawing up statistics on juvenile delinquency in the coming year.

41. When the offence committed by a juvenile was regarded as not sufficiently serious, prosecution was usually not pursued. From 1981 to 1985, for example, Croatia had dismissed 50 per cent of cases against juvenile delinquents and had ordered disciplinary measures in the remaining 50 per cent. From 1990 to 1994, 78 per cent of cases had been settled on the basis of the Law on Marriage and Family Relations.

42. Extra-institutional correctional measures for minors included disciplinary measures, reprimands and assignment to disciplinary centres. Juvenile delinquents were imprisoned only in 11 per cent of cases. There were three types of correctional institution: the usual ones that came under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, an institution for minors with disabilities, and a correctional home where access was restricted. The latter

was in Glina, an area occupied during the war, and the juvenile delinquents had had to be moved during that period after some of them had escaped and committed further offences.

43. The lower and upper limits for juvenile imprisonment had been one year and 10 years, respectively. Statistical data had shown that the longest terms ordered were two to three years. Under the new law, the limits for juvenile imprisonment had been reduced to six months and five years, respectively. Juveniles were held in a special prison, but, if they expressed a wish to be with adults, that was allowed in some cases. They could also be kept separate if they wanted to continue their education.

44. Pre-trial detention was an exceptional measure and was limited to a total of three months before sentencing took place, although that limit could be extended if there was a risk that the juvenile might run away. The judge had to ensure that the trial was as short as possible. A special regulation existed on alternatives to detention; a juvenile could either promise that he would not leave his place of residence or he could be placed in an alternative institution. In 1991, a total of 63 juveniles had been detained: 13 for up to 15 days, 13 for up to 2 months, 18 for up to 90 days and 8 for 4 to 5 months. In 1992, proper detention conditions had not been available owing to the war and, in 1993, 83 juveniles had been detained. In 1994, 158 of the displaced persons in Croatia had been juvenile delinquents, a very low proportion.

45. A meeting on police brutality towards children had recently been held in the Ministry of the Interior. If judges discovered such cases during their examination of juveniles and, if juveniles submitted medical certificates showing evidence of such brutality, judges were under an obligation to report the matter to the police administration, not to the police station where the juvenile had been interrogated. A recent study had uncovered five reports of police brutality towards children in the past three years; the police officers concerned had been disciplined and three had been dismissed. Eight further reports were currently under investigation. A recent television programme on juvenile delinquency and the police had informed all parents that it was their duty to protect and help their children and that they should not be afraid that reporting cases of police brutality would adversely affect their children.

46. With regard to the trial of juveniles, she said that there was now to be a return to Croatia's earlier legal tradition and to the 1922 Law on the Protection of Minors, which had provided for penalties for offences by juvenile delinquents, as well as for offences committed by adults against minors. Under the new system, such adult offenders would be tried by the Minors' Council. Penalties for juvenile delinquents had been reduced in length and included extra supervision and placement in a correctional home for a period of six months to three years. There were also various alternatives to bringing juvenile delinquents to trial and only 20 per cent of cases were expected to end up before the judge.

47. With regard to the Roma, she explained that disciplinary action against them was complicated by their aversion to being closed up inside an institution. Such action was therefore taken only in the case of very serious offences.

48. Mrs. UJEVIC-BULJETA (Croatia) said that, in cases where criminal offences or socially unacceptable behaviour were committed by juveniles under the age of 14 years, family protection measures were applied. A team of experts investigated the child's living conditions to ascertain whether the behaviour had been in character, whether there had been deficiencies in his upbringing and whether he was seriously disturbed. If the parents were unable to cope on their own, but the situation was not serious enough to warrant the child being separated from them, a supervisor was appointed to work together with the family and he would report every three months to the team on the progress made. The programme prepared for the child would include obligations for the parents, such as the requirement to take the child to a psychiatrist for psychotherapy and to involve him in extracurricular activities. It might also determine the amount of pocket money a child should be given; if the parents gave too little, the child might be encouraged to steal and, if they gave too much, he might be induced to spend it inappropriately. In cases where the child's behaviour was seriously disturbed and the parents, whether responsible for that behaviour or not, were unable to raise him properly, he would be sent to an institution where a team of experts would observe him to identify his problems and draw up an individual programme for him. The new Law on Family Relations provided for a time-limit of one year for the implementation of such measures, as experience had shown that, in the past, there had been insufficient follow-up observation of whether the child's behaviour had changed, resulting in him remaining institutionalized for a two-year period, even though the centre for social work, working together with the family, might have created an atmosphere where he could have returned home earlier.

49. Mrs. SIMONOVIC (Croatia), referring to the question of missing children and the measures being taken to find them, said that, in the areas of Croatia affected by war, families had been separated by force between May 1991 and April 1994 and the data from 11 April 1994 showed that 309 children were missing. Of that total, 127 were aged between 0 and 5 years, 83 between 5 and 10, 86 between 10 and 15 and 24 between 15 and 18 years. Most of the disappearances had occurred in Vukovar, Vinkovci, Vrginmost, Drnis, Beli Manastir, Slunj, Pakrac and Glina, which were the formerly occupied territories of the Republic of Croatia. Ongoing efforts were being made to find those children. Croatia was grateful to the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had found a large number of people during the war. Other organizations involved in the search included the Croatian Red Cross and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The preceding session of the Commission on Human Rights had adopted resolution 1995/38 on the question of enforced disappearances.

50. In addition, a commission composed of representatives of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Croatia had been set up to exchange data and establish the whereabouts of missing persons. It was expected that further progress would be made following the normalization of relations with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and once the peaceful reintegration of the remainder of Croatia had taken place. One of the main goals was

demilitarization, following which she believed it would be possible to determine the fate of the missing persons. Many associations had been organized in Croatia by the mothers of missing persons and they had established contacts with the international community and various international organizations.

51. Mrs. BADRAN requested clarification on the protection of children against accidents, which the Croatian delegation had mentioned as the leading cause of death. She had noticed that, while driving licences were usually issued to persons over the age of 18 years, they could be issued to minors as young as 14 or 16 in some cases. There was a need to review that provision and raise the age to 18 in all cases.

52. Mr. KOLOSOV explained that, when he had spoken of violence, he had been referring not to criminal offences, but to aggressive or violent behaviour. As a result of the war, the current generation of children in Croatia might later show violent and aggressive tendencies. The question he had asked had related to the measures being taken to remedy the psychological damage suffered by minors who had witnessed military operations and all they entailed.

The meeting was suspended at 11.55 a.m. and resumed at 12.10 p.m.

53. Mrs. HRABAR (Croatia) said that her delegation's earlier comments on child mortality and traffic accidents had applied to children who were involved in traffic accidents, and who were mostly pedestrians, not to children who were driving vehicles. The law was very strict and driving licences were issued not to minors, but only to persons over the age of 18.

54. Mrs. SIMONOVIC (Croatia) said that children who had been exposed to violence during the war were covered by a number of psychological and social assistance programmes organized by centres set up by the Government of Croatia and by projects being implemented with the cooperation of the international community and non-governmental organizations. The problems of such children and of persons who committed suicide owing to the psychological consequences of the war were expected to continue to exist for the next five or six years.

55. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to make their concluding remarks and observations.

56. Mr. HAMMARBERG said that he appreciated the challenge of engaging in a dialogue with such a competent delegation. He had been particularly impressed by the delegation's analytic and comprehensive approach.

57. He was fully aware that Croatia had faced serious difficulties in the past several years: first, the transition to a market economy, then the war and its aftermath.

58. He welcomed the comprehensive legal reforms that the Government had undertaken in an effort to incorporate the provisions of the Convention into domestic law. In particular, he appreciated the provisions relating to

children's welfare in the Constitution and in the special Constitutional Law on Human Rights and Freedoms and the Rights of National and Ethnic Communities or Minorities. Another positive step was the reform of the citizenship law.

59. In terms of health care, the Croatian authorities had managed to keep health indicators steady, and that was a sign of a solid infrastructure.

60. He also noted that Croatia's active international involvement included plans for a human rights court in collaboration with the Council of Europe, participation in the Council of Europe's campaign against xenophobia and intolerance, cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and a willingness to work with special rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the former Yugoslavia.

61. He had a number of recommendations and suggestions to make. There was a need for greater coordination among Croatian Government divisions dealing with children's issues. Compartmentalization should be avoided and an integrated approach adopted. Children's rights should be given higher priority on the political agenda, backed by the highest leadership of the country, and that should be reflected in the national budget. Consideration should be given to the impact of privatization of services on disadvantaged families.

62. Efforts to promote and protect children's rights should be systematically and independently monitored. The parliamentary working group was a useful step in that direction, but other mechanisms should also be considered. One possibility was to create a permanent office of ombudsman modelled on similar services in other countries.

63. The Government should take steps to increase the participation of non-governmental organizations in matters relating to children's rights. Regular meetings might be set up between NGOs and the Croatian authorities.

64. Croatia must work actively to build a culture of peace. To that end, the media, particularly the sector which was State controlled, and schools should join the campaign to promote tolerance and understanding. The Government must also take action against human rights violations, including individual cases of harassment. The army and police forces should organize special training courses to help develop attitudes of tolerance. Police should be recruited from all minority groups. The existing procedures for filing complaints of discrimination or harassment should be reviewed and strengthened. The impartiality of the judiciary should also be scrutinized.

65. He welcomed the steps taken by the Government to bring to justice those who had committed offences during the events in Krajina in August 1995, thereby demonstrating the sincerity of its invitation to the Serbs to return to that region.

66. The Government needed to make even greater efforts to give children opportunities to express their views. A comprehensive approach was needed, including increased budget allocations for education.

67. Some important steps had already been taken to eliminate domestic violence and child abuse. Campaigns to raise awareness would be a useful adjunct, along with stricter legislation. In that connection, the courts should not distinguish between "gross abuse" and "abuse" because such a distinction implicitly sanctioned certain types of abuse.

68. Mrs. EUFEMIO said that she welcomed Croatia's decision to withdraw its reservation to article 9 of the Convention after it had enacted family legislation and established special family courts in 1996.

69. She appreciated the Government's efforts to review existing legislation and to draft new legislation in the light of the Convention, while bearing in mind the effects of the war on children. She looked forward to receiving copies of the new laws and information on their implementation.

70. There was an urgent need to update the statistics on children's rights and, in particular, on how the enjoyment of such rights had been affected by the war. Such statistics should include children throughout the country. The mechanisms for the collection and integration of statistical data and for the development of indicators needed to be improved.

71. Important research had already been done on the psychosocial impact of the war on Croatian children. However, more studies were needed on the personality development at various age levels of the different cultural groups in the Republic. With such information, a behavioural schema could be developed and could serve as a guideline for parents and professionals.

72. Under the current system, each regional or local child welfare authority was monitored by a different ministry. It would be preferable to coordinate efforts by means of a global mechanism which would monitor and evaluate implementation at all levels.

73. During the current period of reconciliation and social reintegration, the Government should be careful to maintain a proper balance between protecting the rights of children and promoting their participatory rights.

74. International and national non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies should be encouraged to contribute to the formulation of the Croatian national plan of action.

75. Mr. KOLOSOV said that, as a national of a country going through the transition to a market economy and one that was also affected by military conflicts, he could certainly understand the difficulties Croatia was facing. At the same time, he drew attention to the urgent need to educate the youth of that country in the virtues of tolerance and understanding. To that end, he recommended that the summary records and the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee should be circulated, in all possible languages, throughout Croatia. The Convention should become a topic of discussion in the media and in schools. Minority children in Croatia must understand that they, too, were protected under the Convention.

76. He agreed that it would be useful for the Committee to receive an interim report from the Croatian Government by the end of 1997.

77. Mrs. SARDENBERG said that, in view of the complexity of the current situation in Croatia, she hoped that the Government would be able to implement the provisions of the Convention in a gradual fashion. She too endorsed the idea of an interim report; such a document could be used to guide the authorities as they worked towards full compliance with the Convention.

78. Mrs. BABIC (Croatia) said that her Government was making every effort to increase respect for human rights in Croatia. The dialogue with the Committee would help to reinforce the efforts already being made and encourage the authorities to go even further. In her view, the country had the human and moral resources to face the challenge of protecting and promoting human rights and, in particular, the rights of the child.

79. Her delegation appreciated the Committee's recommendations and suggestions, which corresponded to her Government's legislative efforts. It also was well aware of the importance of the implementation of and follow-up to all new legislation.

80. The Croatian Government would make every effort to ensure that all citizens appreciated and upheld the principles embodied in the Convention.

81. Her delegation welcomed the suggestion that an interim report should be submitted by the end of 1997; it was convinced that many of the proposed activities would be in progress by that time. Her Government would not stop there, but would continue to work to improve the lot of Croatian children.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.